

Hurdy-Gurdy's First Cousin Popular in Aruba

As much a part of any Aruban dance as the dancers is the **caja di musica**, (music box) that has been grinding out party music in the bright-colored homes for the last 35 years.

The **caja di musica**, like its first cousin the hurdy-gurdy, comes from Italy, or did, before the war. The box shown in the photographs is said to be one of the first three brought to Aruba; it arrived here in 1909, and is still used at dances several times a week, with occasional broken strings as the only part needing replacement.

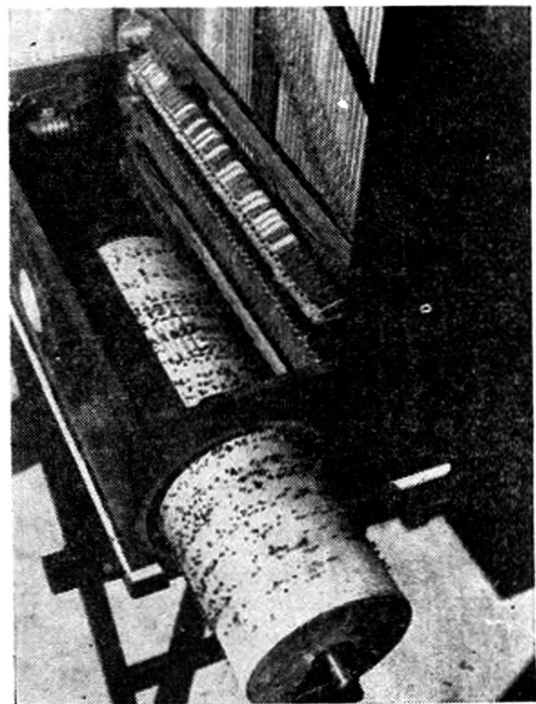
There are between 30 and 40 **caja** in

inch left producing. As the roll is turned by a crank, the nailheads trip felt-covered hammers, making them strike the strings.

Each of these rolls contains eight different songs. The nails that make each song are scattered all over the roll, and which tune is going to come out of the box when the crank is turned is determined by shifting the roll a sixteenth of an inch in one direction or the other, causing a completely different set of nails to trip the hammers.

The box illustrated, which is owned in partnership by Henwey Hirschfeld of

Want To Sleep by Your Side), a tumba. A few foxtrots are in the repertoire of this box, such as **Beer Barrel Polka**, **Bi Mir Bist Du Shoen**, and **You Are My Sunshine**. Mairsy Doats, a current hit tune north of Cuba, hasn't yet appeared in the **cajanan**, but in time it may.



At left is a closeup showing the inside of a **caja di musica**, with the roll partly pulled out. The black spots on the roll are nails that make the hammers (seen just above the roll) strike the strings. The strings that make the music are in the upright section of the box. At right, two Aruban youngsters (who learn to dance almost as soon as they learn to walk), try out a number. Three more rolls, each with eight songs, are on the floor at right of the picture.



Aruba. Their popularity rises and falls; occasionally musical instruments supplant them as a dance accompaniment, as they did a short time ago, but the music box always comes back, and is very popular with party-throwers at present.

In the type of mechanical music it produces, it is similar to the hurdy-gurdy that was common on big-city streets in the United States 15 or 20 years ago, but produces its sounds in a different way. In the hurdy-gurdy, the crank turns a cylinder that operates a bellows, that acts on a series of reeds that produce the music. In Aruba's music box, on the other hand, the music is made by hammers striking strings, as in a piano. Details are shown in the smaller photograph. Hundreds of headless nails, closely packed, are driven into the wooden roll, with about an eighth of an

the Marine department, and Dominico Schwengle, is a single variety. Some have been made "double" locally, by making the roll bigger so that it plays twice as long. Rolls are now being made by an Oranjestad resident, and cost about Fls. 70.

The picture at right also illustrates the gadget without which a **caja** is never seen. It is the **wichiro** (called a **wiri** in Curaçao). This is a piece of metal a foot long, with ridges on top, that is scraped with a **clavo**, a metal rod the size of a spike. It gives the time to the dancers, and an expert can make it produce rhythms or beats that are impossible for a Northerner to duplicate.

Most of the songs in the **cajanan** are South American favorites, some 20 or 30 years old, that automatically start feet to shuffling. Such are **Don Simon**, a waltz, and **Mi kier Drum Banda di Bo** (I

Nearly every day you probably see the three persons shown below. Can you guess their identity? (Answer on page 8).

